Aint I A Woman?

a midwest newspaper of women's liberation 25¢
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Never having been sure
of anything

One wishes
to be sure
of just one thing
or other

A Man
A Person
Money
Position
Organization

But in fact
one cannot be sure
of anything

Except the necessity
for change
And how to do it.

We Demand

Any discussion of why we make non-cooptable demands must begin with a description of the system in which those demands are made. In the Amerikan corporate-capitalist system, the only important motivation behind the institutions of business and government is profit. If you look behind anything that business or government does, you will find that profit is the reason it was done, and profit is seen as the engine of progress in a capitalist society. You can't tell the difference between business and government because they are run by the same people (men who move from defense contractors to senators or Secretaries of Defense-continued interchanging directors of business and government), for the same ends--increasing profits. Little ditties appear on the news all the time about how General Motors knows that to put less metal in the bodies of cars endangers life, but they can't endanger their profits. Talk of the social responsibility of business is a sham. To get what we need in this society we must have money, and to get money we must make a profit off the sale of our labor or by controlling the labor stolen from others. It doesn't matter what gets in the way of profit-making. We know that we cannot exist in this society without money and we do what we can to get it. This kind of behavior on the individual level is necessary when a whole society works this way. When the powerful institutions of society are profit-motivated, the needs of the people fall by the wayside.

Big business (and big organizations, big professions) is the pillar of this country and serves the interest of a small number of families - those who inherit wealth and positions and their hired managers who manipulate economic policies resulting in depressions, unemployment, inflation or whatever is needed to prop up the profits of the 200 large corporations. Economic disasters for average people - like recessions and unemployment -- aren't unplanned as big business and government would have you believe--they are planned by people with a class interest. It's socialism for the rich and capitalist competition for the poor in America.

The corporate capitalist system is also based on competition. We do not see competition as the means to meeting the basic needs of all people. Cooperation is the only road we can take to assure all people of decent lives. In this system, however, there cannot be enough necessities for all people because there is more profit in providing luxuries and non-necessities for the rich (and for the poor). The nuclear family is an important part of economic society, not something that always has and always will exist. Its form has been determined by the changes in economic society to a large degree . The economy depends on competition between nuclear families and it depends on the markets that such privatization creates. The nuclear family also serves to keep women out of an over-crowded job market, or at the bottom of it. It keeps them in a servile position in that labor within the home isn't recognized as useful production (in fact, it amounts to the man's boss procuring the labor of two people for the price of one). Because the little power one has in this society derives from the money obtained from selling one's labor, women are kept down as an oppressed group by the nuclear family which keeps them from social production. Women have to be sold on the beauties of privatization and the concomitant need for more and more goods, and on the function of the husband to provide them.

Co-optation is the attempt of the system to appease angry people with reforms it has the ability to make. It isn't that these reforms are bad, but that they are irrelevant to the struggle to free all women. Given that the system is an inhumane profit oriented one which metes out material well-being unequally and only to those who are able competitors, the government can not grant equality and justice, and this is what we're asking for. It is the nature of power that no one who has it gives it up voluntarily. The reforms the system makes in answer to demands made upon it, are things that can be given without causing a change or disruption within its structure. But without a redistribution of power the inherent injustice and inhumanity of capitalism remain. A system that has profit not humanity as its basic moving force can not meet a demand humanely.

Demands that are not formulated so that if met, the needs of all women would be fulfilled, will be turned against us by men in power to increase divisions between women along class and race lines. For instance, the demand for equal job opportunity applies to only those women who are privileged enough to be able to compete in the job market for bearable jobs. Unless we demand the socialization of housework as well, we are being turned against our poorer sisters who would be the natural maids in such a system. Being able to compete equally for the dirtiest jobs doesn't alleviate the situation of poor women. Enforced poverty is the problem and only a restructuring of society will relieve it.

We for once want a solidarity between all women. We have been kept isolated and apart from each other in the economic classes of our men. Depending on which class we have been in as the possession of men in that class, we have been subjected to the unequal advantages or suffering of that class and turned against each other as pawns in the competitive games staged by a male supremist, profit orientated system. And racism too has been used to divide us - to blind us to our mutual womenhood. For once we refuse to be bought off with advantages at the expense of our sisters. We must free all our sisters to free ourselves to be more than commodities owned and controlled by classes of men.

If we are serious in our commitment to build a society that meets the needs of all people, then we must be careful to set our goals high and formulate the demands of our movement in revolutionary terms so that we will not be co-opted by accepting reforms which can only help the lives of women who already have the privilege of an acceptable skin color and an acceptable pocket book.

4. WE DEMAND THAT WOMEN RECEIVE EQUAL PAY. EQUAL WORK AND EQUALITY IN THE JOB MARKET.

8. WE DEMAND AN END TO THE DEFINITION OF INDIVIDUALS IN TERMS OF THEIR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS.

3. WE DEMAND THAT WOMEN BE GIVEN FREE SELF-DEFENSE AND PHYSICAL TRAINING.

Everytime there is a strike against institutions like Universities or churches and the people make demands on them, there are always some who point out that these institutions have no power to meet demands such as stopping the Vietnamese war, racism, or sexism. Nor do they have the inclination or money to provide free education for all people, free 24 hour day care and free medical care. They couldn't meet any of these demands without a radical change in the structure and in the structure of the country. We demand day care and medical care, adequate annual incomes, and education because that is the minimum people need to live, but we know it will take a revolution before people get what they need out of this country.

If we believe that capitalism is inherently exploitative and that anything short of abolishing that economic system entirely will still leave some people oppressed, then we will be careful to formulate our demands in a non-cooptable way --that is so that we will not think they have been met by just a reform of the system. For instance, the demand for abortion for women is stated two different ways by women's liberation groups. The political consciousness behind the demand is reflected by the way it is formulated. Groups that demand the legalizing of abortion without demanding that it be free do not have in mind the needs of the last first. They also don't have their eyes open. Several states have legalized abortion, but its cost still prevents millions of women from obtaining them. The system has met the demand in a reformist way, but the solution did not solve the problem for all women. The liberal statement of the abortion demand also naively assumes that it will be administered justly by an inhumane government. There is no concern over the genocidal possibilities of legalized abortion: that just as Puerto Rican women were used like guinea pigs for testing the pill, abortion may be used to control the growth of the third world within this country.

In formulating our demands we must keep in mind that women--all women have been denied power and control over their lives and that is what is needed. We do not ask to merely be granted the availiblity of certain medical services but we ask that we have control and decision making power over what those services will be.

We feel that the importance of our demands lies not in the ability of the present system to grant or not grant them but in the content of those demands. For if our demands are for things which truly will meet the needs of all women not just women who already have advantages due to economic class or race, they will communicate to all women that those of us involved in the women's liberation movement are serious in our desire to liberate all women. And they will hopefully communicate to many women the fact that their needs are not being met within the present system.

Most important, the making of demands is a way for us to begin to envision the society we want--the kind of real changes that will be worth the struggle because they will free all women. We begin thus to define the work that must be done before and after a revolution to establish conditions within which all people can live decently. We also begin to define the commitment we must make, the demands on our own time and energy to bring about the liberation of all women.

9. WE DEMAND AN END TO THE MARRIAGE CONTRACT

10. WE DEMAND AN END TO THE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST OUR LESBIAN SISTERS.

5. WE DEMAND THAT EVERY INDIVIDUAL IN THIS SOCIETY RECEIVE A GUARANTEED ADEQUATE INCOME.

2. WE DEMAND THAT FREE ADEQUATE HEALTH CARE BE AVAILABLE FOR ALL PEOPLE.

11. WE DEMAND THE RIGHT OF SELF - DETERMINATION FOR ALL PEOPLE.

1. WE DEMAND THAT A SYSTEM OF DAY CARE CENTERS BE ESTABLISHED.

7. WE DEMAND AN END TO TRACKING IN THE SCHOOLS AND THE IMMEDIATE ESTABLISHMENT OF FREE AND RELEVANT EDUCATION.

6. WE DEMAND AN IMMEDIATE END TO THE SEXISM WHICH PERMEATES OUR CULTURAL MEDIA.

WORKSHOPS

Saturday Sept. 12 & Sept. 19

10:00 am & 1:30 pm

Wesley House
120 N. Dubuque

Why Womens Liberation? Love & Marriage Lesbian Consciousness

The poem on the cover is by Roxanne Dunbar and reprinted from Issue three of No More Fun And Games.

WHAT WE DIDN'T AND WHAT WE DO

August 26th - Strike! The idea was conceived by Betty Friedan (past president of NOW - National Organization of Women) as the day when women would walk off their jobs or go to work and do no work. Women at home were to carry out no household duties. A day of demonstrations across the country. Except in Iowa City.

Although the idea originated with Betty Friedan, the media created the day. In the same way as "flower children" did, woman's rights sold newspapers that day, and that week. Beforehand were the estimates of how many would attend the demonstrations, what activities were planned, what critics thought would be the effect, and what major employers anticipated. Afterwards were the head-counts (of course lower than anticipated, for how could there be more?) including the fact of sizeable male attendance in some cities, interviews with employers - "No, no women walked off here", and even interviews with store people - "No, I don't think our business was affected." Who gained? The women's movement got some publicity, made itself known to more women, who hopefully received somewhat of an honest treatment of the issues presented at the rallies and demonstrations. And a lot of newspapers and magazines were sold.

Many women probably attended their first women's rally that day. How many were women who did not have to strike to have the afternoon free? How many already had child care, free of the responsibilities that keep so many women down? Women with transportation or car fare? Women drawn by the demands of day care, equal pay for equal work, abortion? Women not being ground under the heel of Amerika.

The purpose of the day isn't quite clear. Perhaps NOW women (or Betty Friedan) felt the need to prove how many women the movement has drawn into it. To prove to all of our detractors that there is a woman's movement. The women in Iowa City don't feel that need. There is a woman's movement, and its worth and strength do not depend on how many women appear at one rally, or 1000 rallies. Or any number of one-day strikes.

How could we ask women whose jobs were their means of support to take off from work that day? Risk getting fired in the belief that a one-day strike could accomplish something? How can you negotiate when you say how long a strike will last? Not only is nothing accomplished in that short of time, there is no way that the injustices to women could be overturned in one day.

There was pretty good apparatus set up for demonstrations, for that's what the day really was. A strike is day-to-day work, organizing where you find women - at their jobs, in their homes.

Iowa City WLF took no action on that day because we didn't discuss it. We were wrapped up in our day-to-day things.

We started with demonstrations, though. On the Miss America pageant and on the pill. But demonstrations have to have chairwomen or spokeswomen, and speakers. We feel that this encourages elitism, and that the media will try to make leaders of whoever seems most likely. The media has shown that it can and will create a star-system for us that we don't want. We've found that workshops can educate, answer specific questions, and provide a forum for exchange, on a much more personal level. They can't obviously confront the power structure (if that's what you're into).

About the same time that we began having workshops as a means of reaching out to women, our own group broke up into small cells. We were able to begin to work collectively, to try and share responsibility. We divided on the basis of interest - Speaker's Bureau, AIN'T I A WOMAN, Gay Women, Day Care, with the possibility of a Medical Issues group functioning in the fall. These groups are where discussions of issues are held, leaving the monthly large-group meeting for taking care of business.

The Day Care cell has set up three free day care centers in Iowa City. One of the day care centers is open not only during the day but also offers free night care. These three day care centers are collectively community controlled by the parents and volunteers who work in the centers.

The Gay Cell has in the past initiated workshops on loving women, and there will probably be more to come. One of the major concerns of the Gay Cell is organizing and talking with gay sisters about their special type of oppression. In the past the cell has put together a page for the paper AIN'T I A WOMAN. However, this was discontinued in order for the Gay Cell to have more time to get its politics together.

During the summer the Medical Issues cell has not done too much, but it hopes to organize a practical first-aid class and perhaps even free medical services. There is plenty of room for this cell to expand and it needs help in getting off the ground.

The Speaker's Bureau cell is organized to handle all requests from people who want someone from Women's Liberation to come talk to them. They have established a speaking policy for our group in Iowa City, and all requests for speakers must go through them.

The Publications Cell puts out this paper. As with the day care centers all of the work is done collectively and the decisions are made by all of the women who put out the paper together.

Our learning to work collectively has meant less emphasis on another very important part of WLF - organizing. Women were attuned to thinking about women's rights that day - and we hadn't made ourselves available. And neither were WLF sisters across the country able to make their demands for more than day care, more than equal pay for equal work, and more than abortion heard by the organizers of the 26th. For if we are to say anything at all, let it be towards the liberation of all women.

the following courses are offered by the U of I ACTIONS STUDIES PROGRAM - non-students (women) are welcome

DESTRUCTION OF THE FEMININE MYTH

This three week short course is devoted to the exposure, discussion, and destruction of the myth about women's "inherent" inferiority, their sexual roles, their psychological and social make-up, their occupational abilities, the feminine ideal as presented in the communications media, the economic system and the family as an instrument of oppression, and other racist views designed to further the exploitation and discrimination against women.
Prerequisite: Oppressed Female Status
Organizational Meeting: Wed. Sept. 16 at 7:30 pm in 19 PHBA.
Coordinators: Anne Silander and Pat Pringle

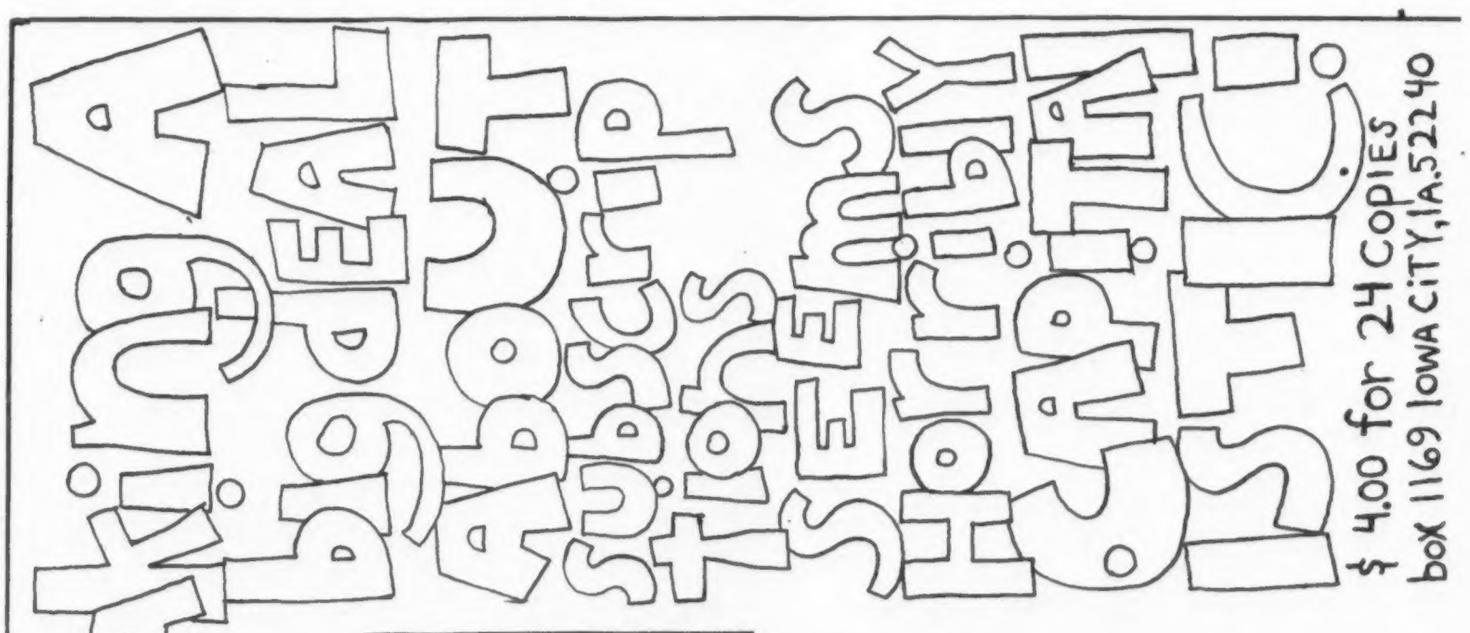
ORGANIZING FREE CHILD CARE

5 hours work per week at one of 3 Women's Liberation free day care centers with individual project to be arranged if the course is taken for credit. The work will be with pre-pre-schoolers and pre-schoolers.
Credit: 7E:293 (graduate students only) other credit arr.
Organizational Meeting: Mon. Sept. 14 at 7:30 pm in 17 PHBA.
Coordinators: Francie Hornstein & Sondra Smith
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Robert Carlson

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: WOMEN'S LIBERATION

An historical study of the Women's Liberation Struggles of our past...from the colonial period to the present.
Credit: 16:100 (History) for 3 hrs.
Course Meetings: Tues. & Thurs. 6pm-8pm beginning Sept. 15. Room arr.
Coordinator: Sheryl Malfeld
Enrollment limit: 20. See Sheryl Malfeld.

Ain't I A Woman? is published by the Publications Collective of the Iowa City Womens Libertion Front. We are a group of 10 women.



If your group wants to receive bundles of AIN'T I A WOMAN?, send 15¢ per copy.
Minimum bundle: 20 copies

AIN'T I A WOMAN? is published on the second and fourth Fridays of each month by the Publications Collective of the Iowa City Women's Liberation Front, P.O. Box 1169, Iowa City, Iowa 52240

The voice of the Midwest needs to be heard in the Women's Liberation Movement. Ain't I A Woman? will print without editing any laid-out page from a Midwest (New Mexico thru Ohio) Women's Liberation group. We would like to encourage other women to start working collectively to avoid elitism and destructive power relationships that pit us against each other. We will send details on deadlines, page size, column length, etc. if you would like.

Things for MEN to do:

Discover what your privileges are as part of a privileged caste.

DISCOVER why you can't give SOMEONE else your privileges.

Think about what you feel when you look a woman up and down.

kiss a brother.

Try to be emotional about something close to your heart.

Think about the difference between a relationship of two women and one of a man and a women.

Think twice before you tell a woman how to run her movement.

Buy three guns. Give one to your mother, one to your wife, and one to your sister.

Hold your legs together every time you sit down for a whole day.

Stare into the eyes of a salesman.

what future plans do you have for your son? ... your daughter?

REMEMBER all the times you felt like crying when your dad played with you too roughly.

Cry

Discover what its like to be called irrational when you are just expressing strong feelings on an issue that is important to you.

How did your parents treat you differently from your sister.

How many times have you said "my wife"? "my children"?

what did you feel like when you were little and you saw your father with another WOMAN?

Do you feel differently about divorce now that you are a man?

And let's put one lie to rest for all time: the lie that men are oppressed, too, by sexism--the lie that there can be such a thing as "men's liberation groups." Oppression is something that one group of people commits against another group specifically because of a "threatening" characteristic shared by the latter group -- skin color or sex or age, etc. The oppressors are indeed fucked up by being masters (racism hurts whites, sexual stereotypes are harmful to men) but those masters are not oppressed. Any master has the alternative of divesting himself of sexism or racism--the oppressed have no alternative--for they have no power--but to fight. In the long run, Women's Liberation will of course free men--but in the short run it's going to cost men a lot of privilege, which no one gives up willingly or easily. Sexism is not the fault of women--kill your fathers, not your mothers. -Robin Morgan

This space is for men who want to write in our paper --sharpen your crayons

BIRTH CONTROL:

is it genocide ?

The Guardian runs an article under the headline "U.S. tries to reduce third world population." Various left groups attack Planned Parenthood as an agent of genocide. In all of this there is the explicit charge that any talk of the population explosion is a reactionary smoke screen to cover up the desire of the United States to continue raking off 60% of the world's resources, while holding down third world population growth which threatens to eat into that 60%.

There is a glaring ommission in most of these arguments; but before I go into that, I want to point out the areas where I do agree: (1) It is a clear cut case of economic blackmail when the United States offers foreign aid only on the condition that contraceptives (usually the loop or pill) be pushed throughout the country. (2) There are developing countries which are underpopulated in relation to their labor force needs--it would be absurd to limit population growth in such a case before the necessary degree of industrialization has been reached so that people power can be replaced by machine power. (3) Every case of involuntary sterilization of women that occurs is a denial of the human rights of that woman.

One of the most hysterical articles comes from the Red Women's Detachment and is called "The Genocideology of Birth Control." Any attempt to make birth control available to people who previously couldn't afford it is called "vomiting on the American working class a poisonous concoction of left-over neo-malthusianism and curdled genocide." Lifting phraseology from Peking Review, Malthus is called "a sanctimonious running dog of British Imperialism." Women working for free abortion on demand are accused of trying to ensure "the phoney sexual revolution."

They have totally ignored the implications of their argument, the implications for black and brown women, for all working women. That is, they neglect to openly argue for the right of women to have an unlimited number of children, BECAUSE IF THEY DID, the inhumanity of their position would be clear. Don't tell me that a woman living at near-starvation level, whose children's minds and bodies are unhealthy because they don't get the right kinds of food, who is forced to prostituion and petty larceny to feed and clothe her children--that this woman is supposed to fight for the right to have more children.

In this oppressive, capitalist society, the more children a woman has (note: I don't say: the more children a man and woman have), the more exploited and oppressed she is. If wanting to have fewer children and thus be less exploited and oppressed is counter-revolutionary, then I am tempted to accuse the Red Women's Detachment of desiring to further the oppression of women on the grounds that it raises their revolutionary potential. But that's too cynical, so I won't make the accusation.

The Red Women's Detachment says: "Middle-class women and women's liberation groups can afford to make a big joke out of these issues (birth control and abortion) but women on welfare and working women with small incomes can't." I don't think women on welfare and working-women with small incomes can or do make a joke out of the other side of the coin--having many children, some perhaps wanted, but most probably unwanted.

The heart of the paper is the argument that "the monstrously reactionary capitalist class systematically cultivates pseudo-scientific theories (i.e., birth control, abortion, and sterilization) and props them up with massive propaganda campaigns in order to undermine the revolutionary potential of the proletariat." The drift of the entire paper is that birth control, abortion sterilization are counter-revolutionary in and of themselves.

The fact that a middle-class woman can obtain an abortion if she wants to doesn't reflect on the abortion itself: it's a hideous reflection on the system that will satisfy the needs of only those who can pay. The fact that a middle- class woman wants birth control drugs or devices doesn't make them any safer for her than for the working women.

The fact is, that in this society, the woman with children is exploited and oppressed, to a certain degree if she is middle-class but to a cruel and inhuman degree if she is without a man and must support herself and her children. Alleviation of this kind of exploitation and oppression is not counter revolutionary. It is the sine qua non of the revolutionary participation of women in the struggles for a free society.

Human rights is always the fundamental issue. Perhaps the single most important right for a woman is the right to control over her own body. The fact that women must bear society's children lies behind a multitude of oppressive factors: from the notion that "woman's place is in the home," to economic discrimination on the grounds that a woman is just a "temporary" worker, to the double duty many women must do to maintain both a job and a home.

As a member of women's liberation, however, I am appalled by arguments that encourage, for example, rapid population growth among blacks in the U.S., presumably to "equalize" the balance between white and black populations. That view sees black women as little more than brood mares, whose function is to produce more and more of the right kind of people. That view is opposed to women's fight for freedom.

That view is as blind to the rights and needs of women as the corresponding view among Catholics (at least among those who obey the Pope). The only group that holds something like that view and that seems headed in a more humane direction is the Black Panther Party, which--if they are encouraging the birth of more black children--is at least concerned with putting into practice the equal responsiblity of men and women for the care and raising of children.

That view ignores the fact that the essence of a post-revolutionary society is equality, but not the numerical equality of all racial groups so that they can act as checks and balances upon each other--not the kind of numerical equality that is a way of pitting power group against power group.

It must not be forgotten that in nearly every present society, encouraging population growth (that neutral, clinical phrase) really means oppressing women by concentrating on their function as breeders. Unfortunately, the opposite side of the coin, discouraging population growth, (at least at the present time) also means oppressing women by forcing them to use inadequately tested and possibly hazardous drugs and devices.

But when women's liberation groups attack the drug companies for "pill pushing," it is not to be seen as an anti-contraceptive campaign. It is a campaign for full disclosure--disclosure by the drug companies on harmful and/or unpleasant side effects and disclosure by doctors on the statistical effectiveness of each kind of contraceptive drug or device (you'd be amazed at the discrepancies). This must serve as the basis upon which women can make informed choices.

A woman cannot make an informed choice about the way she wishes to use her body without complete freedom to choose among the various methods of contraception, including sterilization.

It seems clear from the actions of women in women's liberation that they are wholly aware of the direct forms of oppression that result from "population growth." These women are, in increasing numbers, choosing to remain unmarried, or if they are married, choosing to remain childless.

Disregarding the oppression experienced within the institution of marriage itself, for the moment, these decisions are obviously made to avoid the unavoidable oppression that-- in this society--is the lot of women with children. Birth control, far from being genocide in and of itself, is for the women seeking liberation the only way out of one of the worst manifestations of the oppression of women.

In an article on the liberation of blacks and women in the Black Scholar, Linda La Rue writes: "The black woman is demanding a new set of female definitions and recognition of herself as a citizen, companion, and confidant, not a matriarchal villain or a step stool baby-maker. Role integration advocates the complementary recognition of man and woman, not the competitive recognition of same.

"The recent, unabated controversy over the use of birth control in the black community is of grave importance here, Black people, even the 'most liberated of mind,' are still infused with ascribed inferiority of females and the natural superiority of males.

"How many potential revolutionary warriors stand abandoned in orphanages while blacks rhetorize disdain for birth control as a 'trick of the man' to halt the growth of black population? Why are there not more revolutionary couples adopting black children? Could it be that the American concept of bastard, which is equivalent to inferior in our society, reflects black anglo-saxonism?"

"Do blacks, like whites, discriminate against black babies because they do not represent 'our own personal' image? Or do blacks, like the most racist of whites, require that a child be of their own blood before they can love that child or feed it? Does the vanguard recognize the existence of the term 'bastard'?"

"Someone once suggested that the word'bastard'be deleted from the values of black people. Would it not be more revolutionary for blacks to advocate a five-year moratorium on black births until every black baby in an American orphanage was adopted by one or more black parents? Then blacks could really have a valid reason for continuing to give birth.".

"Children would mean more than simply a role for black women to play, or fuel for the legendary vanguard."

"Indeed, blacks would be able to tap the potential of the existing children and could sensibly add more potential to the black struggle for liberation. To do this would be to do something no other civilization, modern of course, has ever done, and blacks would be allowing every black child to have a home and not just a plot in some understaffed children's penal farm.

FREE ABORTION On Demand

Initially, the question of whether or not all women should have control over their bodies, through legalized abortion, appears to be a very simple issue. But of course! All women should have control of their bodies and abortion should be legal! However, the abortion issue is much more complex than it appears at first glance. Recently, abortion has been one of the very few Women's Liberation demands that has been an issue taken up by people outside of the movement. For years, small groups of people have been debating the church's stand on abortion and discussing under what circumstances women should be allowed to obtain abortions. In several states reform legislation has been passed to extend the unusual circumstances under which a woman may obtain an abortion. Abortion is an issue which is being dealt with in the system today, and it is an issue that gives the illusion that something constructive may be done.

However, as one gets deeper into the issue, she finds that there are all sorts of possibilities for an abortion demand. Is the abortion demand a revolutionary issue--if so, how? What type of demand is non-cooptable? Are we really thinking in middle-class terms?

It is very easy to fall into a white, privileged, middle-class bag on abortion repeal. In a fascist pig society abortion repeal can still become just another tool of oppression. The fight for women to have control over their own bodies is an important fight around which the whole issue of putting medical care into the hands of the people can be organized.

To get out of the privileged class and color bag, we must fight for and demand several things on the abortion issue. First, the woman must be the one who finally decides whether or not she is to have an abortion. This final decision should always rest in her hands, and under no circumstances should anyone of the medical profession perform an abortion without first consulting her. Also, under no circumstances whould a hysterectomy or any other type of sterilization be performed unless the woman fully desires it. Finally, the decision for an abortion lies solely in her hands, not in her parents' or husband's hands.

In this society legalized abortion would be the equivalent of mass legalized genocide of lower classes and non-whites. Even today, abortion and contraceptive information is seen as a means to limit the population of low income people and third world people. Bourgeois whites believe that people only have the right to raise as many children as they can financially support comfortably. My God, what a fantastic line, to support not only the right but the necessity for the rich to propagate and prosper while the poor do not even have the right to exist. This type of genocide of the poor and the third world must not be tolerated any longer!

Next, the oppressed people of the world must no longer be viewed as a vast pool of guinea pigs. Their inability to pay the prices demanded for contraception and abortion (be it legal or illegal) is no excuse to prey upon them and use them in experiments of the so-called free health clinics. Hence, abortion demands must include free abotion upon demand for all. However, even so, abortion, contraception, and sterilization services must be the same for all and indiscriminate as to class or color.

Also, as mentioned, abortions must be free. Even if abortions are legalized, it will do poor people no good to have abortion service that they cannot even afford. Legal abortions in hospitals and special clinics now cost the woman from $200 to over $600. Where is any poor or even any young unmarried sister going to find that kind of money? For women without money, legalized abortion might just as well not even exist. Poor women will still have to resort to self-induced butchery, if abortion is not free. If medical services in this country began to serve the needs of women, vaccuum aspiration would be a common, very inexpensive abortion method which could be used in a majority of cases. However, we are told that these machines are very difficult to buy and still in the "experimental" stage. That is not true. In fact, they are being widly used in Japan, Russia, and Eastern Europe. An abortion with a vaccuum aspirator takes about five minutes, is inexpensive, and is safer (statistics from countries where it is in use show) than any other method now available. Even where legal abortion is available, the more expensive and more dangerous D and C (dilation and curettage) is being used. This only goes to point out that the system (specifically medical care) is not serving the people.

Free abortion upon the demand of the woman is not a middle class demand. All women have the right to personal control over their bodies. If this choice is placed in the hands of women and is made free, along with other medical service, then there is no way that the present system can provide this for the people. To think that these needs can be met in the present system and then to accept compromises (such as abortion reform, or legal but expensive abortion) is middle class and is the kind of cooptation we should avoid. We should be under no illusions that free abortion upon demand is anything but a revolutionary demand. This should always be kept in mind, as should the fact that we are fighting for all people and that abortion is only one small piece of the whole struggle.

Genocide

Often it is difficult to understand how abortion can be genocide, but working in a University Hospital, I know that poor people and third world people come in classified as PI (patient indigent) or clinical pay (receiving state aid). This means they immediately are placed on a ward and have students taking care of them under the direction of a resident doctor. Questions are asked and forms are filled out. If the woman is having any difficulty at all with her pregnancy, and if she has a poor family background (that is lots of kids, bad relationships with her husband, on welfare, unhealthy living conditions, etc.) then she is a perfect candidate for an abortion. I can see all those young eager faces trying to convince her that medically it is the best thing she could do. Then also, there are all the added advantages of one less mouth to feed. Any time a poor white or third world woman goes into a clinic for a check up you know she's going to be asked all types of questions on just how she intends to take care of the child. Of course things look grim for her, and in the systems usual half-assed manner the solution will be to get rid of a symptom and not the cause. This means provide abortion service. Hence, abortion will become just one more shabby attempt to help out the poor people.

There can be no doubt that legalized abortion will become mass genocide for the poor. Abortion can be made into a very simple procedure that any medical student could perform. However, poor women obtain health care from clinics where they have next to nothing to say about the type of service and what service they get. You had better believe that if white upper class Amerika has in its head that only people who can comfortably support kids should have them--then that's what will be imposed on poor women in the clinics.

Photo: Michael Hardy

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RCED STERILIZATION IS GENOCIDE!

t of every women to have free and adequate birth control and free ion upon demand is one we do not question. Neither do we question rth control can be used in a genocidal way against the poor, minor- hird world peoples. We know it can be. We know it has been. The that women have no control over the medical care we do or do not d this is the control we must fight for.

We refuse to be coopted by the arguments that inevitably come up when women demand the things they see as necessary. The arguments by men for birth control (meaning free sex for them) or the arguments against birth control (meaning keep them pregnant and barefoot) were easier to answer than the argument that our demands could cause the genocide of poor and third world people. The genocide of poor and third world people will not be caused by women who have demanded free adequate medical care. It is caused by those who have the power women have never had -- by a sexist and racist medical industry and the sexist and racist capitalist nation it is part of. To blame women is to avoid confrontation with the real enemy.

We must be prepared to fight the use of birth control on any woman against her will. But we see the availability of birth control as something we must have.

We know too well that demanding free medical care (birth control included) is to demand only part of what is needed. Poor women will not become unpoor from not having children, nor will the job opportunities or activities that poor and uneducated women can spend their time on increase in desirability. That is why the fight we wage on this issue cannot be separated from the fight we must wage on other issues crucial to all women.

We believe in self determination for all people. We believe that all women have the right to bear as many children as they wish. We believe that all women have the right to not bear children. We will not accept the right to birth control at the expense of the right to bear children. We must be prepared to fight for both.

WOMEN ATTACK STERILIZATION PROGRAM AS GENOCIDAL

DOVER, Del. (LNS)--Eighteen women from Wilmington Liberation Collective, a working class organizing project, disrupted a talk on sterilization at Christ Church in Dover on July 29. Carrying signs, banners, and leaflets, the women took over the microphone and forced the audience of about 100 middle class people to consider the social and political implications of the new push for sterilization.

The talk was being sponsored by Zero Population Growth (ZPG), a national organization concerned with overpopulation.

The women said that the threat of overpopulation, as ZPG talks about it, is a phony issue used to mislead people. Poverty and starvation are blamed on overpopulation rather than on inequitable distribution of resources, the real causes. Mass sterilization for women and men is the new solution to the "population problem." Sterilization becomes genocide.

ZPG claimed that they only advocated voluntary sterilization, not seeing that sterilization is threatening because of who it is inevitably used against, and who controls it.

ZPG is a middle class liberal organization backed by foundation money which will lobby for laws to control population through government "incentive" programs.

The idea is to make it even more expensive to have children, especially more than two. It is obvious who would be effected by this kind of plan--poor people. Discouraging large families not only disregards the cultural tradition of some ethnic groups, but it also runs counter to every demand people are making for such things as free day care centers, free adequate medical care and preventive medicine for families.

Some members of ZPG didn't understand how women who campaigned for free legal abortion could fight against liberalizing sterilization policies.

The women explained that the demand for free abortion is a reasonable demand of women to control their own bodies and to decide when they will and when they will not have children. It has to be linked to demands for day care centers, equal pay, medical care, and safe birth control for it to be a free decision by women.

While sterilization may not seem to be a direct threat to white women, it has already affected black and third world women.

40% of the women in Puerto Rico have been sterilized. Foreign aid is now given in proportion to the amount of birth control measures a country will accept.

Huge Federal programs to sterilize women throughout South America, in India, Pakistan, and in Africa are underway.

In Alabama, a woman on welfare must be sterilized after 3 children if she is to continue to receive aid, and thousands of minority women in New York City, Chicago, and all big city hospitals--even in Wilmington, Delaware--have been unknowingly sterilized without their permission.

The leaflet the women handed out said,

Sterilization is America's new way of controlling people. Women have never been able to control their own bodies. When there was a need for cheap labor for factories, mines, and the frontier, the childless woman was a disgrace. Women were pressured to produce huge families. But today when the poor and young are posing a threat to the stability of America, every means of birth control is being pushed.

Sterilization is a dangerous threat because of who it is inevitably used against, regardless of liberal wording.

In a country where milk is drained into the dirt and grain rots in elevators and is dumped into the sea in order to keep prices high we know that children are dying of malnutrition and starvation not because there are too many children--but because some men like duPont and Rockefeller own 5 billion dollars while others own nothing...

Women have the right to have or not to have children regardless of their financial situation.

Liberating Men & Women From Old Notions

To the collective:

Congratulations to the women with enough initiative to publish a paper. All of us concerned with the role of women thank you. I gained from the first issue of Ain't I A Woman insights, deserved verbal ear-boxing, and considerable consternation. Implicit in several articles were arguments about the nature and plight of women which I think deserve explicit attention. Contributors to the first issue are far from clear and even further from agreement on fundamentals. For the sake of debate I shall point out some of the confusions which plague the movement for the liberation of women.

Much of the confusion emerges from an indecision about whether men are to blame for the subordination of women, or whether they are with women victims of the predominant culture. Let me illustrate. One of the attributes of women reported from the symposium on "loving women" is that women are physically more attractive than men. Either women are objectively more attractive than men, in which case men are not to be blamed for thinking so; or women are only subjectively more attractive, in which case anyone (male or female) who finds women more attractive simply is expressing cultural norms.

The illustration suggests an even deeper confusion. Is there something about being a woman which is worth preserving? Women were described in the symposium as "gentle," "sympathetic." What is the basis for these particularly womanly virtues? Is it biological? Surely it is partly social? If there are virtues worth preserving then there must be parts of the sexual role differentiation worth preserving. It is not clear from most of the statements by WLF members whether women are seeking equality in the sense of identity (an elimination of all role differences) or in some sense of "separate but equal" (an elimination of role differences deemed unfair, erroneous, improper). Short hair and karate lessons seem to imply the former; loving women qua women seems to imply the latter.

Many of the articles in the first issue of Ain't I A Woman refer to the necessity for separation from men as if it were an established precept. I should appreciate an article defending separatism explicitly. I dislike sounding like a reactionary. But it seems to me that the basic problem is not liberating women from men. Rather the problem is liberating men and women from old notions of what it is to be a woman. I resent passionately being considered a piece of fluff with a vacuum cleaner. I throw things when everyone who telephones my office assumes I am the secretary. Will these attitudes really be overcome by shutting out men and women who do not consider them injustice? Most women are boring; they have been taught to be boring; they have been taught they ought to want to be boring. (Most men at least are boring on a greater variety of subjects.) It seems to me at least as reasonable to encourage more women to be interesting and competent, as to demand that men first realize that women potentially are not boring.

What I am trying to argue, among other things, is that a serious movement for the liberation of women cannot afford to be revolutionary. If real gains are to be made women cannot afford to be ideological purists: many women are unjustly exploited who enjoy marriage, support the system, are offended by obscene language. Are they to be chalked off as not worth saving? It is political suicide to insist upon espousal of too large a system of values.

Certainly, the exploitation of women shares characteristics with other forms of exploitation. For at least two reasons, however, it is unwise to overemphasize the similarities. In the first place, exploitation is not necessarily cumulative; nor is the blame comulative. To emphasize the similarity frequently is to obscure the fact that those whose values need to be changed differ. At least half the racists I know are women. Black men exploit women no less than white men. Eliminate all white Anglo-Saxon men and the same forms of exploitation will still exist. This leads to the second reason for not insisting upon revolutionary purism. The number of people who do not approve of and do not practice any form of exploitation is very small. The number of people who disapprove of and actively oppose some form of exploitation is much larger. It is only politically sensible to recruit all people who oppose discrimination against women. The object of political action, revolutionary or not, is to change values and not to eliminate people.

If the revolution comes tomorrow the cessation of discrimination against women is likely to be eleventh on a list of eleven grievances. It is more likely to get lost in the shuffle. In the meantime I shall continue to demand equal treatment in the job market, the right not to bear children, and the right not to want to be boring. These are demands with political solutions short of revolution. Some of us are not willing to wait.

Redefining What Is Political

I hope you will understand that I am not saying your problems are insignificant but I am attempting to share with you an entirely different perspective on what we can do to eliminate the causes. Our perspectives are so different because we do not agree on such basic things as what are real gains, what is political, or what is racism.

People who come to understand their oppression, come to understand the need for revolution. That's what women's liberation is all about. We need liberation, not relief, because we are oppressed as women. You cannot decide what to call the condition of women--you refer to discrimination, subordination, inequality, unjust exploitation (is there a just exploitation?), but never to oppression.

No, the basic problem is not "liberating men and women from old notions of what it is to be a woman" any more than the problem of racism is liberating whites and blacks from old notions of what it is to be a black. That view assumes that the oppressed have themselves to blame for their condition, a strange position for someone to take who points to other women as racists. Racists are made by the conditions of a racist society--none of us have escaped it. It is not just a reflection of the cultural norms but the fact that there have been material rewards for being a white racist--rewards for the people who have benefitted from the labor power of blacks. We have to struggle to change the conditions and institutions which perpetuate racism, but not by changing the attitudes and values of our oppressors. One lesson from the civil rights movement is that you don't change people's values and expect behavior to change but vice versa--change behavior and attitudes will follow. It is not that exceptional blacks have talked their way to freedom, or "saved" their brothers and sisters, but that the threat of a strong black community has been great.

How well we can see from the black movement in Amerika that the "bootstrap" theory of improving oneself doesn't work--not for a group so necessary for the cheap labor of a capitalist society. There is strength only in unity--we can drop our forms of "strategic behavior" (not threatening our masters by seeming too bright, too aggressive, too uppity, etc.) when we are strong enough to survive without them.

If we consider it unwise to "overemphasize the similarities" between the oppression of women and blacks we risk misunderstanding both, and we risk being played off against our black sisters and brothers again (as happened to the women's movement in the 19th century) by a white male power structure which uses the labor of blacks, browns and women in this country as a source of cheap labor power to run a capitalist society. We run the risk of thinking that black men have had the power to oppress us (Yes black men do oppress women less than white men) if we are white and middle class.

What can it matter to the woman forced to do the menial tasks for little pay (be she white or black) that you don't like being mistaken for a secretary? The real question is why do you resent it? How can you talk in one breath of uniting all people who oppose exploitation and in the other of resenting to be mistaken for a secretary? By the very definition of your problem you have already stopped identifying with most women.

Women's liberation as a movement is in the process of redefining what is political--only then can we say what makes political sense. Surely there are virtues that oppressed people have which are worth preserving, but it is as strange to consider these part of a sexual role differentation worth preserving as it would be to consider preserving "racial role differentation." It is this very notion of preserving differences that is at the basis of a separtist movement, something women's liberation as a movement is not. We ask nothing of men (especially not that they recognize us as potentially not boring) because we see that the boys will just have to get themselves together or be left behind. Personal sympathy and personal help from individual men is nice but you don't build a movement on it. We know that from the dynamic of the black movement and we understand the basis on which revolutionary black organizations like the Black Panther Party make coalitions with white organizations--not mergers, but coalitions.

I think we can afford to ask for everything and to see the process of revolution as Rosa Luxemburg did: "the true dialectic of revolutions (is) not through a majority to revolutionary tactics, but through revolutionary tactics to a majority--that is the way the road runs."

The question is not what would happen if the revolution comes tomorrow--the question is what we are doing to unite women for a revolutionary struggle. Ultimately, nothing else matters--not your job or mine, your debating points or mine, your boredom or my anger. But I think you will just have to wait because there are no individualist solutions to oppression, it is material conditions and not values which must be changed, and you have no strength so long as you prefer to run hand in hand with your oppressor.

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16 July, 1970

AIN'T I A WOMAN?

Sisters,

I read about you in Off Our Backs, and would really appreciate it if you'd put the following short blurb in your publication for us soon:

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"BEWARE OF THE DESIRE TO HAVE PROTEST PERFORM THE DIFFICULT TASKS OF ART" Berthold Brecht

This begins the policy statement in the ADF catalog. Brecht was an artist not a revolutionary. What can his statement mean to us. Art says something and looks nice but it does not kill, destroy, build, neutralize power. Beware of the desire to have art perform the difficult tasks of protest!

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Everytime a slick letterhead request for a plug comes in from some non-profit organization (as if declaring yourself non-profit is to wave a white flag) I want to puke my guts out. I want to puke cause you don't yet see that non-profit and corporation is a contradiction in terms, cause you don't see making films and tapes about people's misery and then peddling them for a price is unforgivable, cause you don't see the insult in referring to us as Women's Lib as if liberation is just another catch phrase to be abbreviated and mangled by your alternative to the commercial media, cause you define the liberation of women as a social problem. War is a social problem, Racism is a social problem, Women's Liberation is no social problem.

You don't see your request for tapes as insulting as it is. You don't care that if women can make tapes, they can also distribute them and probably for free or for cost to their sisters. You would have us think we need a non-profit corporation with letterhead and an office and a hierarchical staff with a man-president to distribute tapes. Or that some kind of media is needed to "stress that action is not only possible but crucial". There is a lot of work to be done and it would get done a lot quicker if people would act instead of making films about acting, if people would devote the energy it takes to bring about a revolution instead of forming non-profit corporations which rent films for prices that only middle class intellectuals would rent for a weekend one nite view of misery.

You even felt compelled to indentify every one of your sponsonsors by his!!! pig profession. Authors, Psychiatrist, Executive Secretary. I want to puke cause you don't see how disgusting it is to flaunt those names with all their ritzy middle class privileged jobs, cause you don't see your division of labor as repulsive cause it is uncollective, cause you don't see it as sexist cause you employ Sally Pugh as a secretary and Jerry Stoll as a president.

I want to puke cause you are peddling our misery without even beginning to understand it.

There are a lot of middle class, college educated people around who don't want pig jobs cause pig jobs stink so they get pig jobs or if they are really privileged start pig corporations that just don't sound like pigshit and try hard to convince us that they are serving the people. A sales pitch is a sales pitch. Lucky Jerry Stoll. How much nicer it sounds being president of American Documentary Films, Inc., working over time to get the message to the people, than being president of Jerry's Office Supplies. Much higher on the left-liberal status latter, huh, Jerry? After all, we have to live and a salary is a salary to those who are use to earning one.

Well, you got your blurb -- now choose your sides -- you can't be part of the solution (revolution) when you are part of the problem sitting behind a corporate desk selling out the people.

Next time take out an ad.

STEPIN FETCHIT WOMAN

by Martha Shelley

Lesbianism is one road to freedom – freedom from oppression by men.

To see lesbianism in this context – as a mode of living neither better nor worse than others, as one which offers its own opportunities – one must abandon the notion that deviance from the norm arises from personal illness.

It is generally accepted that America is a "sick society." There is an inevitable corollary to this statement, which has not been generally accepted: that people within our society are all crippled by virtue of being forced to conform to certain norms. (Those who conform most easily can be seen as either the most healthy, because adaptable, or most sick because least spirited.) The black is struggling to free himself not only from white oppression, but from the sickness of self-contempt and the sick roles he has been forced to play. Women are struggling to liberate their minds from sick sexual roles. It is clear that the self-abasing, suffering, shuffling black is not someone with a personal neurosis, but society's victim – and someone who has been forced to learn certain techniques for survival. Few people understand that the same is true of the self-abnegating passive housewife. Fewer understand this truth about the homosexual.

These techniques of survival help us meet certain needs, at the expense of others.

For women, as for other groups, there are several American norms. All of them have their rewards – and their penalties. The nice girl next door, virginal until her marriage – the Miss America type – is rewarded with community respect and respectability. She loses her individuality and her freedom to become a toothpaste smile and a chastity belt. The career woman gains independence and a larger margin of freedom–*if* she is willing to work twice as hard as a man for less pay, and *if* she can cope with emotional strains similar to those that beset the black intellectual surrounded by white colleagues. The starlet, call-girl, or bunny whose source of income is directly related to her image as a sex object, gains some financial independence and freedom from housework. She doesn't have to work as hard as the career woman, but she pays through psychological degradation as a sex object, and through the insecurity of knowing that her career – based on youthful good looks – is short-lived.

The lesbian, through her ability to obtain love and sexual satisfaction from other women, is freed of dependence on men for love, sex and money. She does not have to do menial chores for them (at least at home), nor cater to their egos, nor submit to hasty and inept sexual encounters. She is freed from fear of unwanted pregnancy and the pains of childbirth, and from the drudgery of childraising.

On the other hand, she pays three penalties. The rewards of child raising are denied her This is a great loss for some women, but not for others. Few women abandon their children, as compared with the multitudes of men who abandon both wives and children. Few men take much interest in the process of child raising. One suspects that it might not be much fun for the average person, and so the men leave it to the women.

The lesbian must compete with men in the job market, facing the same job and salary discrimination as her straight sister. On the other hand, she has more of a chance of success since her career is not interrupted by childbirth.

Finally, she faces the most severe contempt and ridicule that society can heap on a woman.

A year ago, when Women's Liberation picketed the 1968 Miss America pageant, the most terrible epithet heaped on our straight sisters was "lesbian". The sisters faced hostile audiences who called them "commies," "tramps," "bathless," etc., and they faced these labels with equanimity; but they broke into tears when they were called lesbians. When a woman showed up at a feminist meeting and announced that she was a lesbian, many women avoided her. Others told her to keep her mouth shut, for fear that she would endanger the cause. They felt that men could be persuaded to accept some measure of equality for women – as long as these women would parade their devotion to heterosexuality and motherhood.

A woman who is totally independent of men – who obtains love, sex and self-esteem from other women – is a terrible threat to male supremacy. She doesn't need them, and therefore they have very little power over her.

I have met many, many feminists who were not lesbians – but I have never met a lesbian who was not a feminist. Straight women by the millions have been sold the belief that they must subordinate themselves to men, accept less pay for equal work, and do all the shit work around the house. I have met straight women who would die to preserve their chains. I have never met a lesbian who believed that she was innately less rational or capable than a man; who swallowed one word of the "woman's role" horseshit.

Lesbians, because they are not afraid of being abandoned by men, are less reluctant to express hostility towards the male class – the oppressors of women. Hostility towards your oppressor is healthy – but the guardians of modern morality, the psychiatrists, have interpreted this hostility as an illness, and they say this illness causes and is lesbianism.

If hostility to men causes lesbianism, then it seems to me that in a male-dominated society, lesbianism is a sign of mental health.

The psychiatrists have also forgotten that lesbianism involves love between women. **Isn't love between equals healthier than sucking up to an oppressor?** And when they claim we aren't capable of loving men, even if we want to – I ask you, straight man, are you capable of loving another man so deeply that you aren't afraid of his body or afraid to put your body in his hands? Are you really capable of loving women, or is your sexuality just another expression of your hostility? Is it an act of love or sexual conquest? An act of sexual imperialism?

I do not mean to condemn all males. I have found some beautiful, loving men among the revolutionaries, among the hippies, and the male homosexuals. But the average man – including the average student male radical – wants a passive sex-object cum domestic cum baby nurse to clean up after him while he does all the fun things and bosses her around – while he plays either bigshot executive or Che Guevara – and he is my oppressor and my enemy.

Society has taught most lesbians to believe that they are sick and has taught most straight women to despise and fear the lesbian as a perverted, diseased creature. It has fostered the myth that lesbians are ugly and turn to each other because they can't get that prize, that prince, a male! In this age of the new "sexual revolution", another myth has been fostered – the beautiful lesbians who play games with each other on the screen for the titillation of heterosexual males. They are not seen as serious people in love – but as performers in the "let's try a new perversion" game.

Freud founded the myth of penis envy, and men have asked me,"But what can two women do together?" As though a penis were the *sine qua non* of sexual pleasure! Man, we can do without it, and keep it going longer, too!

Women are afraid to be without a man's protection – because other men will assault them on the streets. And this is no accident, not an aberration performed by a few lunatics. Assaults on women are no more an accident than are lynchings of blacks in Mississippi. Men have oppressed us, and like most oppressors, they hate the oppressed and fear their wrath. Watch a white man walking in Harlem and you will see what I mean. Look at the face of a man who has accidentally wandered into a lesbian bar.

Men fear lesbians because they are less dependent and because their hostility is less controlled.

Straight women fear lesbians because of the lesbian inside them, because we represent an alternative. They fear us for the same reasons that uptight middle class people fear hip people. They are angry at us because we have a way out that they are afraid to take.

And what happens to the lesbian under all this pressure? Many of my sisters, confused by the barrage of anti-gay propaganda, have spent years begging to be allowed to live. They have come begging because they believed they were psychic cripples, and that other people were healthy and had the moral right to judge them. Many have lived in silence, burying themselves in their careers, like name-changing Jews and blacks who passed for white. Many have retreated into an apolitical domesticity, concerning themselves only with the attempt to maintain a love relationship in a society which attempts to destroy love and replace it with consumer goods – flowers, mouthwashes, diamond rings, automobiles – and which attempts to completely destroy any form of love outside the monogamous marriage.

This, by the way, is an important point for all kinds of revolutionaries. If you love your brother, you are less willing to stand by and watch him get crushed under the relentless pressures of the rat race, of the doctor bills and the furniture bills. If you love your brother, you won't try to swindle him. Restricting love to the immediate family group isolates each family from the community – each ethnic group from the others – and makes all these isolated frightened people more willing to settle for fancy furniture on the installment plan, for grudgingly bestowed respectability, because they can't get the real thing, real love.

To return to the lesbian – because *lesbian* has become such a vile epithet, we have been afraid to fight openly. We can lose our jobs – we have fewer civil rights than any other minority group. Because we have few family ties and no children, for the most part, we have been active in many causes – but always in secret, because our name contaminates any cause that we work for.

To the radical lesbian, I say that we can no longer afford to fight for everyone else's cause while ignoring our own. Ours is a life style born out of a sick society – so is everyone else's. Our kind of love is as valid as anyone else's. The revolution must be fought for us, too, as well as blacks, Indians, welfare mothers, grape pickers, SDS people, Puerto Ricans, or mine workers. We must have a revolution for human rights.

Maybe after the revolution, people will be able to love each other regardless of skin color, ethnic origin, occupation, or type of genitals. But if that's going to happen, it will only happen because we make it – starting right now.

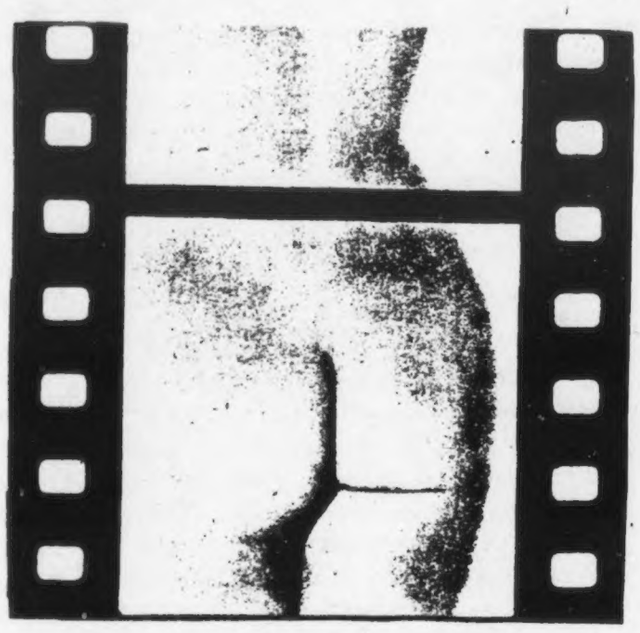
reprinted from ComeOut!!

What in hell am I supposed to do with
such a feeling?

I can't call it love
because of what society has done to our
relationships with each other
in the name of it.

I can't listen to records
and revel in the feeling
the way I used to.
Because of the silver linings
and only you's
that I see now.

And if that isn't enough
I worry about it not being
collective.
This feeling I have and
the collective I live in
are both meaningful to me,
but what is the place of each in each?



That's not even considering sex.

For that one add about
ten tons of guilt
acquired over the years.
If my puritan soul isn't chastising
myself for being too consumed with
matters of the flesh

you can go around touching
anyone you please, but the minute
you think you care for someone,
Touching them gets escalated into a
Matter of the Flesh.

Then I'm worried about a physical gesture
of affection being taken
as some carnal advance.

(Two comments I've heard today remind
me that people think the only thing
gay people care about is MEAT.)

And when I realize that while I'm occupied
with these thoughts
This country is continuing its
extermination of the Third World,

I feel ashamed.

My problem does not inflict pain on me
like Amerika does
to my far away sisters.
So who am I to call such
luxury a problem?

yet neither of them will go away:
The Third World
or my feelings.

Besides
it's unproductive
to be thinking about
this person all the time
when my mind should be on the struggle.

There's no basis anymore
for anything
Women's liberation has questioned
it all.
But when will come the answers?

And then comes the latest
<u>It Ain't Me Babe</u>
which reflects the controversy
in the movement so well
that the paper almost falls apart
in my hands.

The Word (temporary I'm sure) from the
Berkeley Gay Women's Liberation
is that you should merely
walk up to the person and say:
"I care for you and feel physically
attracted to you"
Well fine.

but it's so hard.

It's a good idea though
We both thought so
as we made a joke of it
(for protection):
We could all carry around copies of the
<u>It Ain't Me Babe</u>
and when the time was right
point to the article and say:
"paraghraph three"

And that would mean about the feeling.

But neither of us did.

no More Radical Sabbaticals

FEMALE PERSPECTIVES

The Southwestern Female Rights Union is a small collective of women interested in establishing a strong womens movement based on the struggle of the most oppressed in the Southwest. At this point we are primarily an informational office.

Because of the problems we have talked about it is especially difficult to organize here. We are in the process of developing ideas for various positive programs.

We are interested in any suggestions and help people have to offer. Some of us live together in a house where we also have our office. We are desperately in need of contributions for our rent and the first issue of our journal. Some of us are going to Cuba and so our staff will be severely depleted. We are in the process of trying to catch up with correspondence. We ask that all be patient.

Struggle,

(Nancy Adair, Martha, Mary Maxine)

THE SITUATION IN NEW MEXICO

The situation in New Mexico, in the South, in the ghetto, demands special attention from the white Women's Movement and the Movement as a whole; it demands analysis and sensitivity on the part of all white (anglo) people. We have studied, and are still studying and reading about the problems and the oppression of the Black in her ghetto. Movement papers have analyzed the problems and establishment press, television, and films have inundated us with propaganda concerning the Black's situation. The Movement in centers like New York and Berkeley is just beginning to understand the situation and deal effectively with its racism. In New Mexico, however, we are just beginning to understand our chauvinism and racism because the situation demands a different analysis. Most of us were educated in "heavy" Eastern and West Coast politics. Most of the communication and information we have with other groups comes from both these areas. It is time now for the analysis of the problems of this area, by the women of this area, to reach the rest of the country. (For the beginnings of the analysis of Chicana problems we suggest you read Enriqueta Longauex y Vasquez' articles in "El Grito Del Norte").

Racism thrives here in the form of imperialism and supremacy. New Mexico is a colony as is the South. The government can test its bombs and missiles at White Sands and Los Alomos because it does not have to put up with the objections of an urban white middle class whose good-will it has to nurture. They build their bombs in a third world area and drop them on third world people. The atomic bomb, developed and tested in New Mexico was dropped on Japan. The government which did this continues to send missiles over New Mexico to land at White Sands. Could anyone imagine their sending it over Chicago to land in Lake Michigan?

The government comes to the Southwest and offers good, well-paying jobs to anglos. The Chicano remains unemployed - except in the low-paying menial jobs - his land is legally 'stolen' in quit-claim deeds - he moves to the ghetto of the city with his family where he can be easily contained and constantly harrassed by the police. (We use he in this instance because the plight of the Chicana is much worse - she usually owned no land, her jobs are worth less money, welfare is ridiculously low.

The Chicano and Indian are people raised on the land. A hundred years before the Pilgrims landed the Chicano and Indian were fighting the harsh elements, growing their crops, and herding their sheep. They built irrigation systems to tap the precious water supply. They fought droughts and flash floods, they fought for their freedom - from Spain - the frontiersman - and the United States government. When the railroad came the land became valuable for raising cattle to supply beef for the East. The anglo raped the mountains for minerals and stole the range lands, overgrazing them, turning the plains into a desert. With the help of "heroes" like Kit Carson they raped and massacred the Indian. They destroyed the buffalo and the deer. Worst of all they brought their capitalistic, imperialist system; the economy that turns people into leeches, parasites who live off the misery of others, that creates the Vendido and Uncle Tomahawk.

A second migration is unundating the Southwest... the cult of the commune, the freak, the longhair. Hollywood and Dennis Hopper have discovered a cheaper way to make "authentic" movies. The "richey" comes to escape the noise and smog of the city, the artist comes because this is truly "the land of enchantment" and the people are so "real", so "genuine". They live in dirt houses, attend dirt churches, eat tortillas, chile, and beans. Tourists don't have to deal with the expense and language of a foreign country when they can visit the quaint mountain villages of the Sangre de Christo and the "sublime" pueblos of the Rio Grande. The beauty of New Mexico has created a mask unlike Harlem that covers reality of extreme poverty. The tourist, imperialist representative in his own country, does not see that there are no hospitals for thousands, that the mountain streams - the very subsistence of the people - are polluted by mines, lumber mills and "hippies orgies". They do not see into the schools where children are forbidden to speak their own language, that the history which is taught is not their history but that of the Pilgrim... Kit Carson, a genocidal murderer, who led their forefathers on a death march, is acclaimed a great American hero. The media tells them how lucky they are that the anglos came to build them good highways to the ski resort and the nearest McDonalds - the former they could not afford and at the latter they would not eat.

Movement people come through on their way to California, light up a joint, and stay because it is so beautiful...when they travel from Berkeley to San Francisco they do not stay in Oakland because it is so beautiful. New Mexico is becoming the land of the Radical Sabbatical. The Mesa has a way of suspending our sense of humanity. How can hunger, disease, despair exist in such beauty? It does. We call for a boycott on travel and Tourism in New Mexico. If you come -- come as a true revolutionary, come with the consciousness that we have to work together and to fight together -- when asked-- against the oppression of the most oppressed.

Anglo women who were planning to come to the workcamp had not been invited by Chicanas. They were coming to work and learn, but we who planned the camp did not have sufficient insight or knowledge to understand the position we would be in. Instead of arriving as sisters we would be seeing the loveliness which brings tourists; instead of achieving unity we might be splitting the ranks of the Chicanos. Rather than be guilty of any of these errors in judgement we called off the workcamp. We offer our apology to our sisters in California who helped us but who did not participate in the decision. We, in New Mexico, were solely responsible for our ignorance and insensitiveity to the problems. We feel that we have learned something from this experience and we have wanted to share it with you. Our further apology for the delay in this analysis reaching you. Sometime in the future it may be possible to have a camp when we are invited. The Cuban pople have asked many North Americans to join the Venceremos Brigade and participate in the sugar harvest. When and if a group of Chicanas find it opportune to educate a group of white middle-class Female Liberationists then, perhaps, we can have a workcamp. We feel that women should get together in workcamps next summer. We must learn to work together after we have learned to talk together. We support the efforts of any who are interested in holding such camps. We welcome any correspondence, critical anayysis.

SOJOURNER TRUTH,
"THE LIBYAN SIBYL."

"That man over there say that a woman needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helped me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me a best place ...
And ain't I a women? Look at me. Look at my arm! I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me...
And ain't I a women? I could as much and eat as much as a man when I could get it, and bear the lash as well...
And ain't I a woman? I have borned thirteen children and seen them most all sold off into slavery. And when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard...
And ain't I a woman?"

Sojurner Truth: Speech before the Woman's Rights Convention at Akron, Ohio in 1851.